

Notes and Observations

CURTIS AND WOOD ON ERIOPYGODES IMBECILLA FABR. (LEP., NOCTUIDAE). — Mr. Whitebread asks (*Ent. Rec.*, 89: 13) whether *E. imbecilla* is a “rediscovered” British species. I had recently investigated this question, and I concluded that, on the evidence available, the answer is “probably no”.

The first reference to it appears to be that in John Curtis' *Guide to an arrangement of British insects*, p. 146; it is as follows: “Graphiphora Hubn. (no.) 10. imbecilla.? Hub.”

Curtis' *Guide* was published in shilling sheets from 1829 to 1831. It was designed as a label list for collectors, an index to his own cabinet and of his wants for additions to it, and an advertisement of his beautifully illustrated *British Entomology*, parts of which were appearing at the same time. The introduction explains the symbols attached to many of the species listed, from which it appears that *E. imbecilla* (a) had *not* been discovered as British by Curtis himself or by his friend J. C. Dale, (b) that it was still a “desideratum” for his cabinet, (c) that it was *not*, however, considered by Curtis to be a doubtful native, though no indication is given of his reason for introducing it as British. The question mark in the entry is not explained; it may refer to doubt about either the identification of the species or about its author.

Curtis may have some genuine British discoveries to his credit, but he was not discriminating about what he put in his cabinet or what he listed in his *Guide*, or, indeed, in some of the illustrations to *British Entomology*. One can only say that he was not as bad in these respects as his contemporary, J. F. Stephens. Curtis was certainly a keen, but also an imaginative, collector: J. C. Dale, who accompanied him on an enterprising collecting trip to the Highlands in 1825, recorded in his diary: “Curtis *thought* he saw an *apollo*”. Somehow, this “thought” became later translated into a widespread belief that *Parnassius apollo* Linnaeus could claim Scottish nationality.

Against this background, W. Wood in his *Index Entomologicus* was surely justified in relegating *E. imbecilla* to the doubtfuls; and we can safely retain the name of Dr. G. A. N. Horton as the discoverer of the species in Britain. — R. F. BRETHERTON, Folly Hill, Birtley Green, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey, GU5 0LE.

Migrant Lepidoptera in Britain in early March 1977

Mr. Peter Davey, a meteorologist, says that between the 26th February and the 4th March, 1977 was a period of exceptional migratory weather, and that in western Spain, the Canary Isles and north-west Africa the temperature rose at that time to far above normal, with the airstream from there reaching southern England by the 2nd March. It seems likely therefore that the early migrant species recorded hereunder were associated in a movement to this country at that time, except possibly the Humming-bird Hawkmoths which may have hibernated here. — J.M.C.-H.